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UNDP AND UNITED NATIONS REFORM

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report, prepared as a basis for discussion on item 3 of the provisional agenda, highlights the specific contributions of UNDP to the follow-up to the Programme of Reform of the Secretary-General (A/51/950) and the corresponding General Assembly resolutions 52/12 A and 52/12 B as well as resolution 53/192 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

2. In addition to the above legislation, UNDP has taken as its basis for its implementation of United Nations reform the mandate given it by the Executive Board in its decision 94/14 of 10 June 1994, to help the United Nations family become a unified and powerful force for sustainable human development.

3. At the request of the Administrator, the United Nations Development Group Office (DGO) has prepared an update of overall progress to date pursuant to the Secretary-General's reform initiative (see annex to the present report). The Administrator wishes to express his sincerest appreciation to United Nations Development Group (UNDG) partners, especially the members of the United Nations Development Group Executive Committee, without whose full engagement and participation none of the achievements to date would have been feasible.

II. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PROGRAMME OF REFORM

4. The Programme of Reform (A/51/950) made five specific recommendations that directly involve UNDP: (a) the creation of the United Nations Development Group (Actions 9 and 10, paragraphs 73 and 153); (b) predictable funding through multi-year arrangements (Action 11 (a), paragraph 167); (c) relations with the World Bank (paragraphs 79 and 167); (d) support for natural disaster mitigation activities (paragraph 189); and (e) establishment of the United Nations

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Enterprise Liaison Service (Actions 17 (c) and (d)). These recommendations are discussed below and outstanding issues are highlighted.

A. United Nations Development Group

5. As indicated in the report of the Administrator to the Economic and Social Council (DP/1999/10), the creation of UNDG represented, from the UNDP perspective, a strong boost to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions on operational activities, namely resolutions 47/199, 50/120 and 53/192. UNDP provides important support to this recommendation of the Programme of Reform through its funding of DGO, which serves, inter alia, as the permanent secretariat for UNDG. The reaffirmation in the Programme of Reform of the role of UNDP as the funder and manager of the resident coordinator system as well as the provision that the Administrator chairs UNDG provide for considerable managerial coherence both at headquarters level and at the country level. A very positive development has been the secondment of senior staff from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which has increased the sense of common ownership of and participation in DGO by other United Nations entities.

Remaining challenges

6. UNDG has achieved rapid progress on specific provisions of the legislation in operational activities, as detailed in document DP/1999/10. The main remaining challenge is to achieve effective outreach to the United Nations system as a whole since operational activities coordinated under the resident coordinator system concern the system as a whole. Bridge-building through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its subsidiary machinery, especially the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) will be a priority in 1999 and coming years. The encouraging role of governing bodies of the funds and programmes as well as of the specialized agencies will be crucial to further progress here. At the inter-agency level, CCPOQ, at its fourteenth session in March 1999, approved, on behalf of ACC, the landmark ACC Guidance Note on the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), which de facto converted the CCA/UNDAF into tools for the use of the system as a whole and not only of the United Nations entities. This step helps to address a major concern of Member States regarding the involvement of the United Nations system as a whole. At its first session for 1999, on 9 April, ACC took note of the CCPOQ action and also approved a statement supporting the follow-up to resolution 53/192.

Recommendations

7. The Executive Board may wish to call on UNDP, through its participation in UNDG, in ACC and the ACC machinery, and through its direct support to DGO, to continue to support and promote ongoing efforts to build bridges between the work of UNDG and the operational activities of the United Nations system as a whole.

B. Predictable financing through multi-year arrangements

8. The Programme of Reform calls for the development of a proposal on core funding with burden-sharing and multi-year pledges. The landmark Executive Board decision 98/23 of 23 September 1998, as well as its decision 99/1 of January 1999, paved the way for a new era in the core funding of UNDP. UNDP is currently in the process of developing the multi-year funding framework (MYFF), which integrates programme objectives, resources, budget and outcomes. The overall objective of the MYFF is to increase core resources; in doing so, it will both serve as the basis for future multi-year funding by all UNDP contributor countries and outline the results to be achieved with the announced resources.

Remaining challenges

9. The focus of the present discussion is less on UNDP itself than on the contribution the organization can make to United Nations reform in general; the challenge presented in this context, therefore, is to ensure coherence, cross-fertilization and learning among the different multi-year funding initiatives under way in the United Nations funds and programmes as well as in the broader United Nations system. Here the role of the Economic and Social Council at the intergovernmental level and that of ACC at the inter-agency level are crucial.

Recommendations

10. The Executive Board may wish, taking into account the results of the first annual funding session held in April 1999, to call upon Member States to increase core funding for all United Nations operational activities on a continued, assured, predictable and multi-year basis; and to provide the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly with specific recommendations on the future of the United Nations pledging conference, taking into account the views expressed by Member States.

C. Relations with the World Bank

11. UNDP has always had, and will continue to have, a strong operational relationship with the World Bank. Efforts to strengthen these operational relationships continue and these are reflected in the annual report of the Administrator.

12. At a more general level, the reform processes both within UNDP and within the World Bank have focused attention on the need to redefine, and indeed to reinvent, the relationship between UNDP and the World Bank. With the adoption of its strategic compact, the World Bank has made a major commitment to poverty eradication and to a significant change process that would help it to achieve its objectives. As a result of this change process, there is no longer the same clarity that previously existed between the rules and functions of the World Bank on the one hand and United Nations entities on the other.

13. The new situation presents tremendous opportunities and also some concerns. The new focus of the World Bank on a number of the key goals articulated by the

global conferences is providing significant support to the achievement of those goals. The Administrator believes there is enormous potential for strengthened collaboration to attain globally agreed objectives.

14. UNDP and the World Bank are engaged in extensive discussions on a number of issues that have arisen out of the change processes being undertaken by both organizations. Constructive exchanges of views have been held regarding the issue of access to grant-based funding for technical cooperation.

15. Discussions have also been held regarding the World Bank's initiative to launch comprehensive development frameworks (CDFs). UNDP has always been deeply involved at an operational level in supporting national capacity-building for aid management. To the extent that Governments may wish to launch a CDF process, UNDP stands ready to respond to requests for assistance. At the same time, it is clearly premature to reach a conclusion on what the CDF means in operational terms. UNDP, through UNDG, will also focus on the future relationship between the CDFs where they are launched and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and a number of issues will need to be clarified in this respect.

16. From the perspective of UNDP, the comparative advantage of UNDG lies precisely in considering such questions as the relationship of the CCA/UNDAF to the CDF and how a forum can be established through which the United Nations entities can arrive at a common understanding on these matters. Direct outreach to the World Bank should continue to be at the level of the individual funds and programmes, such as UNDP, who have active and growing bilateral operational relationships with the World Bank. In this bilateral relationship, the funds and programmes could express the common understanding within UNDG.

Recommendations

17. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Development Group regarding collaboration with the World Bank;

2. Encourage the United Nations Development Programme to develop further its productive, direct relationship with the World Bank, particularly at the operational level.

D. Support for natural disaster mitigation activities

18. The Programme for Reform called for the transfer to UNDP of technical cooperation support functions in natural disaster mitigation. This transfer has now been effected and the funds corresponding to 1998 from the $2.3 million foreseen for it in the United Nations biennial budget have now been transferred from the regular budget of the United Nations.

19. UNDP has absorbed the responsibilities previously held by the Emergency Relief Coordinator for operational activities in natural disaster mitigation,

prevention and preparedness. The responsibilities formally discharged by the United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme and Disaster Mitigation Branch (in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the past) have now been integrated into the Disaster Reduction and Recovery Programme (DRRP), based in Geneva, as part of the Emergency Response Division of UNDP.

20. Seven professional staff along with additional support staff have been recruited to support the ongoing efforts of UNDP in disaster reduction and recovery activities. UNDP goals in disaster reduction and recovery are to achieve a sustainable reduction in disaster risks and the protection of development gains; reduce the loss of life and livelihoods due to disasters and ensure that disaster recovery serves to consolidate sustainable human development.

21. DRRP has already initiated new capacity-building activities in developing countries aimed at promoting comprehensive disaster reduction approaches, establishment of national and subregional disaster reduction strategies, incorporating disaster mitigation, legislation in disaster-prone countries. UNDP also supports a coordinated inter-agency approach within the United Nations system and with other development partners, including NGOs.

Remaining challenges

22. The importance of this area of cooperation was highlighted by the recent series of natural disasters, including those related to the El Niño phenomenon and Hurricane Mitch. These natural disasters emphasize the importance of continued efforts at developing national capacity for disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness.

Recommendations

23. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the progress achieved so far in the transfer of these functions to the United Nations Development Programme;

2. Encourage the creation of further links between these activities and the mainstream capacity-building activities of the United Nations Development Programme in the area of disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness within country cooperation frameworks, especially in those countries prone to natural disasters.

E. Establishment of a United Nations enterprise liaison service

24. In his Programme of Reform, the Secretary-General requested a proposal on a liaison service with the private sector along the lines of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), which is already in operation for relations with civil society. UNDP, after consultations within UNDG and with NGLS, developed a proposal that was submitted to the Secretary-General on 5 December 1997.

Remaining challenges

25. Subsequent inter-agency discussions within ACC and elsewhere have shown little enthusiasm for the creation of yet another liaison service, regardless of its location. Such units have considerable problems in ensuring lasting material and financial support from member organizations.

26. The challenge has been now redefined as the need to achieve some common understanding among organizations of the United Nations system on interaction with the private sector, especially in view of the statements made by the Secretary-General at the World Business Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, in 1998 and in 1999. He called for greater collaboration and for a global compact between the United Nations system and the private sector, based on the norms of the United Nations system, initially in three areas: human rights, environmental norms and labour standards. Interaction with the private sector was also the main theme of the first session of ACC, 9-10 April 1999. Clearly, most entities of the United Nations system have growing relations with the private sector and such a common understanding is an imperative.

Recommendations

27. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the changed focus of the recommendations contained in Actions 17 (c) and (d) of the Programme of Reform;

2. Encourage the United Nations Development Programme to pursue its inter-agency dialogue with other members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination with a view to arriving at a common understanding on interaction with the private sector.

Annex

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PROGRAMME FOR REFORM
PROGRESS IN THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT GROUP
AN INFORMATION NOTE
PREPARED BY THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT GROUP OFFICE
APRIL 1999

In his 1997 report, "Renewing the United Nations: a Programme for Reform (A/51/950)," the Secretary-General offered a comprehensive plan to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations to enable it to meet the challenges of the new century.

Many of the reform actions aim to strengthen the United Nations as a force for sustainable, people-centred development and poverty eradication. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG), created as a key feature of the Secretary-General's reform programme, brings together United Nations entities dealing with development issues. It is led by an Executive Committee comprised of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Food Programme (WFP), and is chaired by the Administrator of UNDP.[1]

The principal goal of UNDG is to strengthen the policy and programme coherence and effectiveness of United Nations development activities. To that end, the group helps to facilitate joint policy formulation, decision-making, and programme coordination among the United Nation development entities. UNDG also works to improve management and efficiency.

This update provides information on the progress made towards those objectives between July 1997 and April 1999.

I. ENHANCING THE UNITED NATIONS RESPONSE TO COUNTRIES' DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

The United Nations works with countries around the world to help them to address a range of fundamental development problems. It does so by using the diverse skills and experience available among its departments, funds and programmes. While each organization has its unique strengths and talents, the reform initiative creates a framework in which individual United Nations organizations can work together and respond to the needs of member countries "in a

[1] The following entities are members of the full United Nations Development Group (UNDG): United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the regional commissions, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict. The UNDG Executive Committee is comprised of: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, and other entities participating as warranted by their interests and mandates. The Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) participate in UNDG as observers.

consistent, coherent, and cost-effective manner (see paragraph 149 of document A/51/950)" required in today's rapidly changing world.

A. Tools for change: the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

The Common Country Assessment (CCA) is a cross-sectoral process designed to provide a coherent, comprehensive analysis of a country's development needs as the basis for the United Nations to formulate a strategic response and focus for its activities. The CCA is a major step towards the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The UNDAF is a strategic planning and collaborative programming framework that helps to identify common priorities for United Nations action in agreement with national administrations. It requires close collaboration between the United Nations and other development partners such as civil society, bilateral aid organizations and multilateral institutions.

Soon after the announcement of the Secretary-General's Programme for Reform, the UNDG launched a pilot phase in July 1997 to test the UNDAF in 18 countries. Experiences were analysed and lessons identified from the pilot phase through a two-pronged assessment, culminating in an interagency workshop held in September 1998.

The workshop recommendations as endorsed by the UNDG, and General Assembly in its subsequent resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998, have guided the drafting of revised CCA and UNDAF guidelines. The wider circle of United Nations agencies that make up the United Nations system was also consulted extensively in the preparation of the revision. On 9 April 1999, all United Nations system agencies adopted the revised CCA and UNDAF guidelines.

Proposals for a phased but full extension of the UNDAF exercise to all United Nations programme countries are being prepared by the UNDG. The extended exercise will be linked to the harmonization of programme cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes, which the UNDG Executive Committee is accelerating in order to encourage better coordination of United Nations operational activities at the country level. UNDG expects to complete the harmonization of programme cycles for most countries by 2002, and for all countries by 2004.

B. Leadership for change: The resident coordinator system

One of the critical elements of the reform programme is to ensure more effective coordination of the United Nations operational activities. United Nations resident coordinators, who are funded and managed by UNDP, are the designated representatives of the Secretary-General for development operations and lead the United Nations country teams in 130 countries. In fulfilling this role, resident coordinators are expected to advocate the interests and mandates of the United Nations in development, drawing on the support and guidance of the entire United Nations family of organizations through the resident coordinator system, in which all United Nations agencies participate.

Ongoing efforts have been pursued to widen the selection pool of resident coordinators to include all organizations of the United Nations system, and to increase the number of women resident coordinators. Other measures adopted and now being implemented to strengthen the resident coordinator system include:

- **New selection procedures for resident coordinators,** which include an independent competency assessment of candidates and an interagency advisory panel established to provide an inter-agency review of potential candidates and to provide advice to the Administrator, who consults with the heads of other United Nations agencies before making recommendations to the Secretary-General;

- **Performance appraisals of resident coordinators and country teams,** which permit all members of the United Nations system to provide their feedback to the Administrator on the work accomplished;

- **Reporting and accountability guidelines for resident coordinators** through which the Administrator has provided written guidance to all resident coordinators on the reporting lines and accountability for their functions;

- **Revised annual reporting procedures for resident coordinators** which provide a clearer basis for assessing the work of the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team, including the implementation of an annual work plan developed by each country team;

- **Stronger backstopping from headquarters** which includes the allocation of substantial financial resources by UNDP for the use of resident coordinators to promote country-level coordination activities and to stimulate collaborative undertakings of the United Nations system;

- **Enhanced training support for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams** which will be in cooperation with the United Nations Staff College and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ).

C. Partnerships for change: Working with the World Bank

In his report, the Secretary-General called for "an appropriate distribution of responsibilities between the World Bank Group and the United Nations for the benefit of programme countries (paragraph 163 of document A/51/950)."

To this end, UNDG and the World Bank are focusing their attention on the following three areas:

- **Knowledge networks.** Discussions are currently under way between representatives of UNDG and the World Bank on the establishment of a global knowledge network and the possibilities for United Nations participation in such a network. UNDG and the World Bank have subsequently agreed to share their video conferencing equipment at the country level as a first step towards improved cooperation in this area;

- **Capacity-building and technical assistance.** In January 1998, a UNDG delegation met in Washington, D.C. with representatives of the World Bank to initiate a dialogue on cooperation in the area of technical assistance and capacity-building, an ongoing dialogue that is being broadened to include the Comprehensive Development Framework recently launched by the World Bank;

- **Interface between the UNDAF and Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) exercises.** UNDG and the World Bank identified Mali and Viet Nam as pilot countries for this exercise. Currently, UNDG is undertaking a review of the outcomes of the pilot exercise as a basis for encouraging further collaboration in other countries.

D. Closing the gap: Linkages among core missions and frameworks

In the spirit of the Secretary-General's reform proposals, UNDG is taking steps to ensure strong linkages between the work of UNDG and that of the other three Executive Committees created by the Secretary-General as one of his major reforms.

A joint **UNDG/Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs** working group has been established to assess how to strengthen the linkage between the normative and operational activities of the United Nations system as well as how to ensure the effective participation of normative agencies in the UNDAF process.

A joint meeting of the **Executive Committees for Peace and Security, Humanitarian Affairs** and the **UNDG** was held in November 1998 to discuss issues warranting a common approach by the three Executive Committees. The joint meeting recognized the need to reinforce the linkages between consolidated appeals for humanitarian assistance, UNDAF and other mechanisms for integrated programming for recovery. It decided that OCHA, as facilitator of the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and UNDG, as the lead of UNDAF, should be charged with the responsibility of ensuring there is consistent and regular exchange of information on the development of both processes. It was agreed that the revised UNDAF guidelines would incorporate a section on disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery, drafted in consultation with OCHA and other relevant United Nations bodies.

II. TURNING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

One of the key components of the reform effort is the translation of new ideas and knowledge into action. In addition to contributing to the formulation of United Nations development policy, the UNDG has committed itself to ensuring the transition of policy into practice.

A. Springboard for change: Follow-up to the United Nations global conferences

The resident coordinators and United Nations country teams have a special responsibility to work with Governments on the implementation of resolutions United Nations global conferences. Working with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the CCPOQ secretariat, the Administrator and UNDG are providing guidance to resident coordinators on the integrated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences. Annual reports of the resident coordinators are being monitored to assess the degree to which the United Nations is assisting countries to implement the follow-up to the conferences. Also, both the CCA and UNDAF mechanisms provide inter-agency platforms for dialogue and supporting action on conference follow-up.

B. The universality of human rights: the right to development

In line with the Secretary-General's call to make human rights a cross-cutting issue in each of the four substantive fields of the United Nations, including development, the UNDG Working Group on the Right to Development was established in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNDG.

The Working Group on the Right to Development reviewed the provisional UNDAF guidelines and made specific proposals as to how the cross-cutting nature of human rights can be better reflected in the UNDAF process. In addition, the group prepared an informal guidance note addressed to all resident coordinators on how to approach communication issues relating to human rights.

C. Expanding the global talent pool: Gender perspectives

In his reform proposals, the Secretary-General stressed the need for the effective incorporation of a gender perspective in the programmes of all United Nations organizations. The UNDG Sub-group on Gender, formed in June 1998, reviewed the gender content of the pilot UNDAFs and proposed recommendations geared towards a more effective incorporation of a gender perspective in the UNDAF process. In addition, the Sub-group worked closely with the UNDG Working Group on Indicators to ensure that gender aspects were taken into account in the CCA core indicators and the final UNDAF guidelines.

Major tasks for the group for 1999 include: the monitoring of CCA guidelines and indicators from a gender perspective; developing a closer relationship with the thematic groups on gender in the field; the building of gender competencies for resident coordinator selection; working towards a consolidated United Nations approach to gender mainstreaming training/learning; and pushing ahead with training in the prevention of sexual harassment.

D. At the center of UNDG attention: Support for Africa

Africa is of central concern to the UNDG. In response, the members of the UNDG have actively participated in the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa (UNSIA) to address the root causes of problems facing the continent and to support African development. African countries participating in the UNDAF pilot phase were encouraged to use UNDAF as a vehicle for UNSIA. Extensive consultations have also produced an integrated UNDG action plan to respond to the report of the Secretary-General on The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318).

E. World view: Globalization

At the ACC meeting in October 1998, United Nations leaders committed themselves to work together in response to the financial crisis and the challenges of globalization. UNDG was asked to provide guidance and support to country teams in this area. A UNDG Task Force on Globalization was established to share information within UNDG and to link with other parts of the United Nations system in their work on this topic. The Task Force prepared an action plan, which was shared with country teams to help them adjust their responses to the financial crisis. The Task Force is now in the process of analysing country team responses to the crisis with a view to exchanging and promoting good practices in social policy.

III. MAXIMIZING SKILLS AND RESOURCES FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE UNITED NATIONS

Resources available to the United Nations have to be used strategically for the greatest possible impact. UNDG members are especially concerned that the best possible use of their limited

resources be ensured for the benefit of the countries and peoples they serve. In line with the broader reform efforts initiated by the Secretary-General to improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the whole Organization, UNDG has been working on several joint initiatives.

A. Adding value: Harmonization of procedures and policies

The General Assembly has called for greater harmonization and simplification of the policies and procedures used by the major organizations of the United Nations system. As a step in that direction, the **UNDG Sub-Groups on Programme Policies and Programme Operations** have collaborated in clarifying programming terminology used by UNDG member organizations. This innovation simplifies cooperation efforts in the field and furthers the harmonization of operational policies and procedures. All resident coordinators and United Nations country teams now have common definitions of programming terms, including joint programming.

Further work is under way, both by individual members of the UNDG and by UNDG as a group, to modify programme procedures in light of the CCA and UNDAF experience. Other work is being carried out on common approaches and procedures for national capacity-building.

B. Resource-sharing: United Nations House/ common services

Among his reform measures, the Secretary-General proposed that all United Nations funds, programmes and information centres should be part of a single office under the United Nations Resident coordinator, called a United Nations House. To date, 31 United Nations Houses have been designated and a minimum of 10 more is expected in the next year. It is also anticipated that 20 more countries will be evaluated in 1999, with an implementation rate of 50 per cent in 2000.

When people work in the same building, collaboration becomes more likely and coordination becomes easier to facilitate. The establishment of a United Nations House also enables a wider sharing of support services among United Nations entities and a reduction in administrative costs. A common office building creates a sense of community and shared purpose among country team members.

The premises include the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the offices of all representatives of the members of the UNDG Executive Committee and the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) office. Organizations participating in the United Nations House share a commitment for cost-efficiency through the development of a framework for common services. Wherever feasible and cost-effective, other United Nations institutions will be invited to join the United Nations House.

A survey collecting information on common services was sent to all resident coordinators and field representatives for all UNDG Executive Committee agencies in February 1999, as well as to CCPOQ. Responses will be analysed to determine better the status and needs of common services in each country and will provide guidance for action from headquarters.

In a number of countries where United Nations Houses are not an immediate prospect, "virtual" United Nations Houses are being encouraged. Separate offices are connected through a country-based intranet to improve the sharing of information, practices and expertise.

In order to accelerate the decision-making process, the UNDG Executive Committee has created a joint management group that serves as a decision-making body vested with financial and administrative authority on all matters pertaining to common premises and services.

C. Preparing for change: Staffing, training and learning

Change is driven by people. To ensure that it can succeed, staff have to be encouraged, trained and given appropriate learning opportunities to meet the challenges that the reform process poses. Within UNDG, several teams are already at work to help staff to prepare for those challenges.

The **UNDG Sub-Group on Personnel** is currently working on two important staff development issues. First, the group is examining ways to increase staff mobility among its member organizations. As United Nations agency staff are being asked to think more strategically and cooperatively, broad exposure to a variety of agency perspectives and country situations becomes increasingly valuable. The group is also working on providing a better response to HIV/AIDS in the work place.

The **UNDG Working Group on Training** is currently examining four training/learning issues: (a) the support arrangements for the CCA/UNDAF process; (b) updating of existing training packages for HIV/AIDS for use by United Nations country teams; (c) the mainstreaming of human rights and gender issues into training initiatives; (d) coordination of training activities with the United Nations Staff College, especially in the area of United Nations coordination.

IV. THE WAY AHEAD: NEXT STEPS IN THE NEW CENTURY

The reform process is a dynamic one. The actions that have been outlined above are the first results in a continuing programme of reform and renewal. UNDG has set itself a comprehensive agenda, which takes the Secretary-General's reform initiatives forward in a number of areas such as programme collaboration, harmonization of procedures, strengthening of the resident coordinator system and rationalization of administrative structures and services. Building on its early progress, UNDG is energetically pursuing the task of improving the cohesion, impact and cost-effectiveness of United Nations development operations. The goal of improved operations is to increase assistance to the people in countries in which the United Nations works, particularly the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty.

UNDG in brief

A key component of the reform is the grouping of the United Nations funds, programmes and other entities tasked with development activities into the United Nations Development Group, chaired by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. UNDG was established in 1997 to increase the effectiveness and impact of development operations. Seventy per cent of all the United Nations operational work is in development. UNDG members provide policy and programme support to more than 150 countries and deploy more than $5 billion in resources annually towards the promotion of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The United Nations Development Group Office was established by the UNDP Administrator to serve as a secretariat to UNDG and to support UNDP in its resident coordinator responsibilities. DGO is supporting the capacities of UNDG members to take joint action on a variety of reform initiatives. It also serves as liaison to United Nations entities such as CCPOQ to ensure close links between UNDG and the broader United Nations system.